



## Christ United Methodist Church

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**Date:** April 21, 2019

**Sermon:** Words for Easter

**Text:** Luke 24:1-12

**Speaker:** Pastor Don Archer

Whenever I try to describe or explain what this day that we call *Easter* is all about I quickly become overwhelmed. There are those who say that this day, Easter Sunday, the resurrection, is the essence of the Christian faith. So there is no pressure to get it right in twenty minutes or less.

I don't have the words to describe or explain Easter. The Gospel of Luke's telling of the discovery of the empty tomb, has some very interesting words and descriptions of what it was like. I would like for us to consider some of those words & phrases this morning.

Words like: *perplexed, terrified, and amazed*. Phrases like: *they did not find the body, they remembered his words, they told all this, an idle tale, they did not believe*.

From these words and phrases, it is apparent that there were a variety of reactions and responses to the events that transpired *on the first day of the week, at early dawn*. When the group of women arrived at the tomb and found the stone rolled away ...*they went in, they did not find the body*. As I have said before, I salute these women for their courage. It is early dawn, not completely light, a little dark, and they go into a tomb! I'm not sure I would have done that in broad daylight with a flashlight! Not that I'm afraid of stuff like that. Kudos to these women. When they did not find the body of Jesus they were *perplexed*. No doubt. They had made considerable effort to come and anoint the body and there is no body. There is supposed to be a body, but it is gone, stone rolled away, empty tomb. *Perplexing*.

When was the last time something perplexed you? I am perplexed every time I am confronted by new technology. Do you know that refrigerators now come with monitors? A screen on the refrigerator door that lets you see inside without opening the door. It can even tell you that you are out of milk. Some people are amazed by this and welcome it. I am perplexed by it. A television built into a refrigerator. Do you put it in the kitchen or the living room? I could binge watch while I binge eat.

Perplexing. Are we perplexed by the resurrection story? Are we also trying to figure out what it all means? If so, we are in very good company. I think a significant part of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus is discerning what this day is all about.

Not only were the women at the tomb *perplexed*, they were also *terrified*. They were terrified by the sudden appearance of two men in dazzling clothes. They were not afraid to go into a tomb in near darkness, but they are *terrified* by two men dazzling clothes. I'm not sure I understand that. I

do understand what it means to be terrified whenever things get turned upside down and inside out. The body of Jesus was supposed to be in the tomb. The tomb was supposed to be sealed by a large stone. The stone has been rolled away and the tomb is empty. When our expectations, our perception of reality, is altered, even a little bit, we can become rattled, confused, *terrified*. When a routine visit to the Dr. reveals something abnormal and more tests are needed. We/I can become *terrified*. When rumors circulate that our place of employment is closing, going out of business, moving to another state or country, we become *terrified*. As members of the body of Christ, as the church, we often talk about, even demand change ... but when that change comes, it *terrifies* us. The terrified women were comforted by these two mysterious figures in dazzling clothes. *He is not here. They said. He has risen. Remember how he told that this would happen?*

When we are *terrified*, it often helps to *remember*. To remember how God has brought us through other difficult times and circumstances. To *remember* how our friends, our family, our church family, has supported us and loved us through some very rough patches. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper he told his followers *as often as you break the bread and drink the cup, do it in remembrance of me*. Remember the extraordinary love and grace of God revealed in the broken body and shed blood. The joy and blessing of Easter is dependent upon *remembering* Good Friday. In Luke's gospel, the pivotal moment for the women gathered at the tomb comes when *they remembered Jesus' words*. Before ... they were perplexed and terrified. *Then they remembered his words*. Upon remembering, they return from the tomb and tell everything that they had just experienced to the disciples and others.

It is remarkable what can happen, what we can do, what we can face, when we are not *perplexed* or *terrified*. When we remember that we are one for who Jesus died. When we remember the message of resurrection, of Easter, **God's love for us is greater than even death**. When we remember that we are children of God, when we remember the words of scripture, the truth of the gospel in song, we can become empowered to share our faith with others. We want to tell those around us about Jesus ... even when what we say is doubted, *disbelieved*, or *considered an idle tale*.

I think, of all the words and phrases, associated with Easter, it is this word, *remember*, that is speaking most powerfully to me this morning. *Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you...*

Over the years I have noticed how present God can be at the time of death and at funeral services that follow. Those who are grieving and who are perplexed and terrified about what the future will be like without their loved one are often comforted by the words: ***Do you remember? Do you remember when Dad, Mom, Brother, Sister ... did this or said that or helped us or disciplined us or laughed with us? Do you remember what he/she told us?***

Easter reminds us how much God loves us. The resurrection asks us to remember that we are not alone in this life, in this world, or in the life beyond this world. ***Remember what he told you. Do not be afraid. Your sins are forgiven. There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. Peace be with you.***

When this day is over and we return tomorrow to whatever Monday will bring. Remember his words. Remember his love. Remember it is still Easter. Amen.